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Prof. T. Balakrishnan Nayar Endowment Lecture

Terracotta Art in the Tamil Country

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TERRACOTTA ART IN

THE TAMIL COUNTRY

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FOREWORD

Prof. Balakrishnan Nayar popularly known as Prof. T.B. Nayar to his admirers and friends was a part time Numismatics Curator in the Government Museum, Chennai. He was the former Professor of History in the Presidency College, Chennai. His friends and admirers made an endowment in this Museum in admiration of his services to the filed.

His work "Dowlaishwaram Hoard of Eastern Chalukyan and Chola Coins" published as a bulletin of the Madras Government Museum as early as 1966. Several distinguished scholars delivered the Prof. Balakrishnan Nayar Endowment Lectures from 1984.

Prof. P. Shanmugam is a distinguished scholar in Ancient Indian History. He was the former Professor and Head, Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras. He had authored several works and took part in several excavations in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. He explored the Indian Influences on South East Asian Countries with Prof. K.V. Raman and Prof. Noberu Karashima. His lecture "Terracotta Art in The Tamil Country" delivered as an Endowment Lecture under Prof. T. Balakrishnan Nayar Endowment Lecture series on 5.12.2007 is brought out as a bulletin of the Chennai Government Museum.

I hope this work will be appreciated by scholars and students.

Chennai - 600 008

3rd December 2007

(Dr. Shanthini Kapoor, I.A.S.)

PREFACE

The monograph is the fruit of a lecture delivered by me at the Government Museum, Egmore, under the Prof. T. Balakrishnan Nayar Endowment Lecture (2003), on 19th October, 2007.

Terracotta art is one of the ancient art forms of India that has survived from proto historic times to the present day. The figurines produced by the artists by simple modeling using the unimpressive clay and inexpensive tools were superb creations of art. Some of these artefacts were also used in houses during simple ceremonies. Toys in terracotta were also prepared from the early times for the use of children and elders. Though it was always suggested that the terracotta art was a poor man's art, the pieces were produced with the highest care, imagination and skill. Several terracotta figurines exhibit excellent modeling, imagination and a sense of beauty. These pieces were produced for the elite as well as for the common poor.

This art form, though exhibiting highest skills of art modeling has not attracted art historians, archaeologists and historians in Tamilnadu. Though, numerous figurines were available through archaeological excavations, and field visits, the study of this ancient art form has been neglected and in the process few studies were attempted. This monograph would like to bring the vast potential of the terracotta art to the attention of researchers.

I thank the Commissioner for Museums for publishing the lecture in a book form.

Chennai-41,
October, 2007.

P.Shanmugam

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The making of artifacts from clay was an ancient art. The objects were first shaped in wet clay and baked in a kiln. Well modeled and decorated pieces to crudely made and unimpressive ones were produced from early times. The objects produced were of different shapes and types. Some of the objects were used as toys, others as votive objects and the finest ones were used as decorative art pieces. Various artifacts made of terracotta were found all over India in both the scientific excavations and also as stray finds on the surface during field surveys. They could be generally classified under the seven heads as follows: 1. Pottery, 2. Bricks and tiles, 3. Human and animal figurines, 4. Toys, 5. Decorative pieces, 6. Ornaments and 7. Other utility objects.

Among the above objects, the pottery seems to be the oldest object manufactured in all the ancient civilizations from the proto historic period and more particularly from the Neolithic period. It was manufactured in large quantities at innumerable places to the demands of the people. A potter must be skilled in preparing the clay, moulding into some shapes and finally baking in a kiln. Numerous types of pottery with innumerable shapes were produced using different techniques. The manufacture of these vessels ranged from very small pots to large sized urns. These utilitarian vessels were sometimes transported to distant areas through some trade networks. In the manufacture of the utilitarian vessels, simple techniques of art were sometimes employed to decorate them. Bricks and tiles, form a separate category and were manufactured by a different kind of craftsmen skilled in making these objects. They were mostly manufactured in large quantities to the demands of market. They require a different kind of skill and technique like the correct mix of the various ingredients and the shaping of the objects to the correct size and staking them in a kiln and firing at the required temperature.

The human and animal figurines are generally classified and identified as the most important and popular creations of terracotta art. They were mostly prepared to satisfy the religious, cultural and artistic needs of the local population. A higher level of imagination, modeling and finishing is required for creating objects like human and animal figurines. The objects were mostly hand made. In the later periods moulds were employed. The

figurines form a distinct type of art and were produced in all places with some distinct purpose. With regard to the manufacture of toys and decorative plaques some distinct skills are required.

The decorative elements were mostly used to decorate the walls of temples and big houses. They are mostly small medallions and square plaques to be fixed on walls. Numerous decorative pieces were unearthed from several excavations. Some of the medieval and pre modern temples were decorated with terracotta pieces. The tradition of fixing decorative pieces and plaques on walls of residential houses and public buildings continued in the twentieth century also.

The terracotta ornaments consisted mostly of beads, earrings and pendants. We come across a variety of shapes and types. The ornaments were manufactured for the common people and sometimes were also used to decorate their pets and other household animals, especially bulls and cows. Among the objects of utility we may include various objects like, (a) balls, (b) weights, (c) ballasts, (d) spindle whorls, (e) smoking pipes, (f) gamesmen, (g).head rests and (h). terracotta pipes. Some of these objects were used by the industrial groups and craftsmen. The weights, ballasts and spindle whorls were mostly used by craftsmen and weavers. Merchants used weights and common people used gamesmen to play their rustic games. Special skills are required for the conception, modeling and manufacturing of these objects at every level

The Latin word "Terracotta" meaning baked earth (*Terra* = earth; *Cotta* = baked) is applied to the figurines. In the Tamil language the term, *cuṭumaṉ* was applied to the terracotta pieces from very early times. It usually described as a poor man's art. However, it is known that terracotta figurines were used in Royal households, temples, houses of rich people, and also by the common people. Therefore it has to be described as a form of art patronized by all people irrespective of their economic standard

In the ancient period the terracotta objects were prepared mostly by potters. However the brick and tile manufacture was carried out by different craftsmen, since it required a different technological skill. Though, the other types like the decorative plaques and household and utility objects, required modeling and technical skills, they were also undertaken by potters. They seem to have worked as a guild and the whole family seems to have been engaged in this work. All the members in the family have contributed to the art forms in some way or the other. However due to the artistic nature and the skills involved for the work, some individuals could have adopted terracotta making as their special profession.

Previous Studies

The study of terracotta art in the ancient Tamil country has not received any significant treatment among the art historians and the archaeologists. A short account of terracottas collected from excavations is generally appended to an excavation report. In this connection it has to be pointed out that the excavation reports of Arikkamedu, Tirukkampuliyur, and Uraiyur contain detailed descriptions of terracotta figurines, with some good illustrations. In the several books of art published so far, the narration of terracotta art occupies a very insignificant place, whereas the other art forms like the stone sculptures and bronze images were treated elaborately. It is suggested that this was due to a small number of terracotta figurines reported and available for the study. Further, it was also pointed out that the figurines are small and broken pieces and therefore the identification becomes very difficult.

In the last few decades very little significant works were produced. Some of these works report the recent discoveries and summarize the results. There are a few articles which narrate the discoveries made by some individuals in the field. Subrahmanyam and K.V. Raman studied the terracotta figurines and other objects unearthed from the Kanchipuram excavation conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India.[1] A. Subramaniyan in a small paper attempted to highlight the study of terracotta art in Tamilnadu.[2] M.K.Dhavalikar[3], reported his discovery of terracotta figurines from Kadattur (Dharmapuri dist.). Abdul Majeed[4], Poongunran[5], and Sridharan[6] reported some terracotta figurines discovered from several sites explored by them. Vasanthi[7] in her two small papers has studied the female figurines and narrated the development of terracotta art in Tamilnadu.

However there was no comprehensive attempt to describe all the terracotta figurines discovered so far in Tamilnadu. In 1993 an attempt was made through his M.Phil dissertation to study the human figurines by G. Radha Krishnan. His attempt seems to be the first attempt to collect and study all the human figurines found in Tamilnadu.[8]

In the recent decades more discoveries of terracotta objects were reported from excavations and field studies. Some recent papers traced a short account of the terracotta art in Tamilnadu.[9] Teracotta objects unearthed from the excavations conducted in places like, Andippatti, Modur, and Tirukkoyilur were reported. Though some of the excavations brought to light numerous terracotta pieces, they were neither properly published nor reported. Though sufficient materials are found, they are not available to the researchers due to various constrains.

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CHAPTER 2

TERRACOTTA ART IN INDIA

Early Terracottas

The terracotta art in India has a history of over 6000 years. The origins of terracotta art could be traced to the proto historic days, especially from the Neolithic period. The earliest terracotta figurines in India were produced in the 4th millennium B.C. They were found in the Northwestern regions of the sub continent. In the Neolithic phase at Mehrgarh a small and unbacked clay figurine of a male torso represented the Neolithic terracotta art. The Zhob valley in Baluchistan produced several terracotta female figurines. They are grotesque and commonly known as 'zhob goddesses' and supposed to represent the fertility cult. Theses figurines are with different hair styles and are richly decorated with jewellery. In the early Harappan period many sites yielded terracotta art pieces. Kot Digi, situated on the east of the Indus produced one fine terracotta bull. Similarly, Mehrgarh on the west of the Indus produced female figurines of terracotta and stamp seals. The production of the terracotta figurines continued on a large scale. Hundreds of them were found. They are with elaborate hair styles much related to the Zhob figurines.[1]

An assortment of terracotta figurines was reported from the Harappan cities where the Chalcolithic Harappan culture flourished in the 3rd millennium B.C. These figurines were reported from sites like Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Lothal, Rakhigarhi, Dholavira, and Banawali. Both male and female figurines were found. Some of the male figures are with goatee beards. The female figurines are with exaggerated features and are heavily ornamented. Some are having elaborate head-dress or ornaments on their bodies. They mostly represent mother goddess figurines and were worshipped as principal deity of the Indus people. Seated women, mother and child figurines were also found. The animal figurines include bulls, monkeys, dogs, sheep and cattle. They are well modeled and with details of eyes, heads and neck. There are models of carts used as toys. The most interesting of these toys is that of an animal with a moving head. There is a bird on wheels, and a climbing monkey. According to the Allchins, "the plastic qualities of the animals are as a rule more noteworthy than those of the human beings, and show considerable skill on

the part of the artists in representing natural observation".[2] Technically, they were hand modeled, but some pieces were made in single moulds. The succeeding copper hoard cultures of the Indo Gangetic divide also produced a good quantity of terracotta objects. The manufacture of the numerous objects of art was attributed to the rich availability of riverine clay in this region.

The pre Mauryan terracotta art forms are represented at sites like Hastinapura, and Ahichattra. At Hastinapura, a good number of terracottas were discovered from the late levels of period III (6 - 3 B.C.) to the late historical periods, but no terracotta was discovered from the levels datable to the 6 B.C. The terracottas were mostly human figurines. Bodhisatva Maitreya and other Buddhist figures were also found. Another important and a popular subject was the modeling of animal figurines, with the body of a human head and an animal's body. Hand modeled and moulded female figurines with elaborate head-dress holding a parrot was another motif made in this period. The cast figurines attained a state of perfection during the late Mauryan and post Mauryan period. A plaque on which is moulded standing figures of a man and woman, could have been used for decorative purpose.[3]

During the Mauryan period the terracotta art was marked by an impressive artistic activity. These figurines have come from the palace site at Pataliputra, Malva and Kausambi. The most important centre of the art was Patna. They are quite large in size and are characterized by smooth and sensitive modeling. They represent dancing girls and mother goddesses. The figurines represent human figurines with elaborate head-dresses, with several floral motifs. The female figurines and the mother goddess figurines are more in number. Some of the female figurines have prominent breasts and exaggerated hips suggesting that they were made to propitiate the fertility cult. In these figures sometimes the head was made from a mould and the body was hand made. The applique treatment for fixing up the prominent parts of the body like breasts, and ornaments could be noticed in these figurines. In the moulding of these figures some foreign influence is noticed.[4]

During the Gupta period the Ganga Yamuna doab produced some good specimens of terracotta figurines. Some of these figurines were of terracotta plaques used to adorn brick temples. Figures of gods and goddesses, representing mythological scenes drawn from epics and puranas were depicted on these plaques. Terracotta human and animal forms were also prolific in this period. Among the other themes represented are amorous couples, and plaques depicting stories and scenes from daily life. They were modeled with different costumes, coiffure and head-dress, and jewellery. Some of these figurines were painted.[5] They seem to have been used moulds for making images.

Terracotta Art in South India

In South India. Terracotta art developed from the Neolithic period as several Neolithic sites yielded a good amount of terracotta pieces. In Maharashtra, terracotta figurines were discovered in the excavations at Inamgaon, Nevasa, and other sites datable to pre 1000 B.C. Nevasa has produced an unfired clay figurine of a mother goddess with short arms, a featureless face, two short breasts and a gaping navel. At Inamgaon, the early Jorwe levels have given a series of unfired clay male figures without head, as also headless and headed female figurines. The male figures have short legs and short drooping arms and short headless neck. Some of the headless female figurines are without neck. One of the headless female figurine was found with an unbaked clay figure of a bull with long and straight horns. There is a hole near the navel of the female figure and a similar perforation near the hump of the bull. If a small stick is passed through the navel of the female figurine and inserted into the back of the bull, it will show that she is riding on the bull. Therefore it was suggested that this figures was the earliest representation (2 millenium B.C.) of a deity riding on a mount (*vāhana*). Another figurine from the same site is an oval clay box with over fitting lid containing the figure of a mother goddess, unfired but with featureless face, short arms and legs, and prominent breasts. This was found in the floor of a house and is the earliest evidence of a deity kept in a box so that the person owning it could carry it wherever he or she went.[6]

In Karnataka some of the Chalcolithic sites like Haravgeri in the upper Krishna and at Borgi in the Don valley yielded terracotta objects. Neolithic terracottas were reported from Brahmagiri, Piklihal, Sanganakallu, and Tekkalakota. They are mostly figurines of animals, birds and of humans. They are solid and are gracefully moulded in hand, though the facial features were not modeled properly. The eyes are indicated by circular lines and the limbs are cylindrical, and with rounded ends. Among the animal figurines the cow or bull are most common. The other figurines are sheep, pig and birds. In the bull figurines from Tekkalakotta, the hump is prominently shown. Among the four bulls reported from Sanganakallu, one was excellently modeled though the body was featured disproportionately. In one of the bulls its front part is missing, the trunk elongated and the hind legs are rather shapely featured. The other figures of bull are also disproportionately modeled with elongated body, broken hump and horns, limbs and tail, with a conical head with short and stout horns. The bulls from Piklihal, on the other hand, have long horns with more pointed ends. Here, the extant ribs of the body, leg, neck are elongated. Some figurines of bulls show superb workmanship, with prominent hump, thin waist, and gracefully curved flowing tail. From Sanganakallu, one figure of a pigeon, with the broken

beak, the hind and lower parts of the trunk was found. Another fragment of a bird from Piklihal was also reported from the surface.

Broken pieces of male torsos (?) were reported from Tekkalakota and Piklihal. According to A. Sundara it could be a figurine of a humped bull.[7] In Brahmagiri one unbaked animal figurine[8] was recovered from the Stone Axe culture period (1000 B.C to 2 B.C.). It was a sun-dried and roughly modeled animal figure of a pig or a sheep (?). This specimen is identified as a sheep by A. Sundara.[9] Another roughly modeled and indifferently baked animal figurine of a horse or donkey (?) from an un-stratified level also exhibit similar features. No terracotta human figurines were obtained from Brahmagiri.[10]

At Maski, the early levels (1000-400 B.C.) yielded perforated and un-perforated discs only. In the succeeding levels (200 B.C.-100 A.D.) beads, ear ornaments and gamesmen were collected. These levels have not yielded any terracotta figurines. However from the upper levels (1-3 A.D.), one standing female torso[11] was collected. It was moulded in the round and do not attest to any skilful or impressive execution. The left hand is held at the hip and the right hand is pendant and supposed to hold some object. The folds of the drapery are seen between the legs. On the back is seen a single plait of hair coming upto the waist. The animal figurine represents the upper part of a bird,[12] possibly a parrot (?).

The Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Megalithic phases of Andhra region have yielded few remains of terracotta figurines so far. A few crudely shaped and modeled figurines of animals and also of the so called fertility goddesses yielded from excavations. Kesaripalle (Krishna District), yielded 4 objects of terracotta datable to about 5 B.C. No human or animal figurines were collected. They were cones and rings. They were identified as phallic symbols, which could have been used as an amulet or pendant.[13] These pieces have no hole and therefore could not be used as an amulet. However they could be identified as gaming pieces and similar ones were found at Uraiyur and other places in Tamilnadu.[14]

The early historical levels (3 B.C – 3 A.D..) in South India have yielded numerous terracotta artifacts. This period is characterized by the rule of the Satavahanas and Ikshvakus in Maharashrtra, Karnataka and Andhra areas. The Satavahana terracottas were collected from, Kondapur, Yellesvaram, Chandavaram, Peddabankur and Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh; Sannadhi, Chandravalli, in Karnataka; and Paithan, Ter, Kolhapur and Nevasa in Maharashtra. The Satavahana artists used kaolin for making images, since good clay was not available to them. It has been suggested that the Satavahana terracottas show a distinct technological development. They have used double mould to prepare a hollow image in the round. They have used single moulds also.

The figures are mostly secular but some of them could have been used for religious purpose. The images represent a number of human figurines adorned with different decorative motifs. A large number of animal figurines were also reported from different sites. They represent mostly horses. Some of the male and female figurines presented as if riding on a horse in a half standing posture with legs apart and knees bent in almost right angles and hands raised in upward, with a short, plump, sturdy and heavy trunk. Though they are ornamented almost all the figures are naked exhibiting in most of the examples their genital organs. In the case of female figurines also the genital organs are well emphasized. All these suggest the popularity of the fertility cult. Animal figurines represented were horses, bulls, elephants, lions, rams and hybrid animals, with beaks and heads of birds and bodies of animals. The animals are treated in abstraction. Many male and female heads with different head-dresses were found[15] There are a few headless figures found in these sites. They also represent the fertility cult.

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CHAPTER 3

TAMIL LITERATURE ON TERRACOTTA ART

The Sangam literature, the earliest available literature of the Tamil country, provides some information on the manufacture and utility of terracotta images. The Sangam anthologies were usually dated to the first three centuries of the Christian era. Chronologically the materials found in the literature could easily be correlated to the early historical period. Several aspects of Tamil culture were mentioned in the numerous verses.

The literature suggests that people were familiar with the making of clay images. Image making seems to be an important pastime among young girls. The *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and *Naṟṟiṇai* mention that the *pāvai* (image) was prepared with clay (*maṇ*). The images were prepared using the best clay (*vaṇḍal*) available from the rivers and were named as *vaṇḍaṟpāvai*. The other clay images known as *pāvai* and *punaipāvai* were also made from riverine clay. There were images prepared on the banks of the rivers using the wet clay and sand available there. The images were then decorated with flowers and worshipped.[1]

Maṇimēkalai, a post Sangam work informs that the following materials were used for making images of gods : 1. wood (*maram*), 2. clay (*maṇ*), 3. stone (*kal*), and 4.lime mortar (*cuvar*).[2] The term *maṇ* used here could be easily understood as clay. It is also said that the unblemished images of god made out of clay and stone shall not speak.[3] The *Divākara Nigaṇḍu* of the 8th century A.D. mentions that clay was one of the ten materials used for making images by artists. The nine other materials used for making images are, 1.stone, 2.metal, 3.brick, 4.wood, 5.lime mortar (*sudai*), 6.ivory, 7.colouring materials, 8.*kaṇḍa carukkarai*, and 9.wax.[4]

The Sangam literature provides sufficient information to the terracotta pieces used as decorative elements in houses and palaces. *Perumbāṇāṟṟuppaṭai*, mentions that many houses in the city of Kavirippumpattinam had terracotta images fixed on the walls of houses. The term appearing in this passage (*cuṭmaṇ ōṅgiya*) is generally understood as a brick building. However, the term *cuṭumaṇ* in this context could refer to kiln burnt terracotta image. We have good amount of information available during the early historical period about the terracotta figures forming part of decorative features of walls of houses and temples. Therefore this passage seems to indicate that buildings were provided with the

decorative terracotta plaques. *Maṇimēkalai* refer to a big house at Kavirippumpattinam decorated with terracotta images.

Terracotta images were fixed on the door jambs. *Maṇimēkalai* mentions that the doors and door frames were decorated with terracotta images. It mentions two types of entrances. The inner entrance to the palace was decorated with terracotta figurines,[5] whereas the other four main entrances situated on the four cardinal directions were not decorated with terracotta plaques.[6] *Cilappatikāram* also refer to a hall decorated with terracotta images. It was know by the name *maṇṇīṭṭaraṅgam.*[7] *Maṇimēkalai* refers to Temples decorated with terracotta images (*cuṭumaṇēṟṟi yaraṅku cūl pōki,*[8] *cuṭumaṇōṅgiya neṭunilaik kōṭṭam*[9]). It further says that the terracotta images were installed by the relatives of the dead near the pedestal of the Durga temple and were worshipped.[10]

Some details of terracotta artists are also known from the Sangam literature. The terracotta artists were known as *maṇṇīṭṭāḷar*. In Kavirippumpattinam, the ancient port of the Cholas of the Sangam age, the terracotta artisans lived in separate quarters. While explaining the term *maṇṇīṭṭāḷar*, the commentators generally identify them with those craftsmen who have specialized in working lime mortar (*sudai*). However the commentators also suggest that the *maṇṇīṭṭāḷar* were potters. It seems that the commentators have no idea about the profession or techniques employed by both the artists with whom the *maṇṇīṭṭāḷar* are identified. They are very much confused and therefore wrongly identified with the craftsmen engaged in mortar (*sudai*). The techniques and craftsmen in both the cases were different and one cannot replace the other. The clay modeling is different from the making of images by lime mortar. In the case of the lime mortar the artists prepare a figure of his choice using small pieces of stone laid down in mortar after installing supports (*taṇḍam*). No baking or firing is done after this. In the case of terracotta images they are to be prepared in wet clay and fired in a kiln. In both the cases the artists are differently named. The artists who are working in clay for making pottery or images are usually called by the name, *kuyavar* and this name has not been applied to the artists who work in lime mortar (*sudai*). Therefore the term *maṇṇīttāḷar* could refer to the terracotta artists only.[11]

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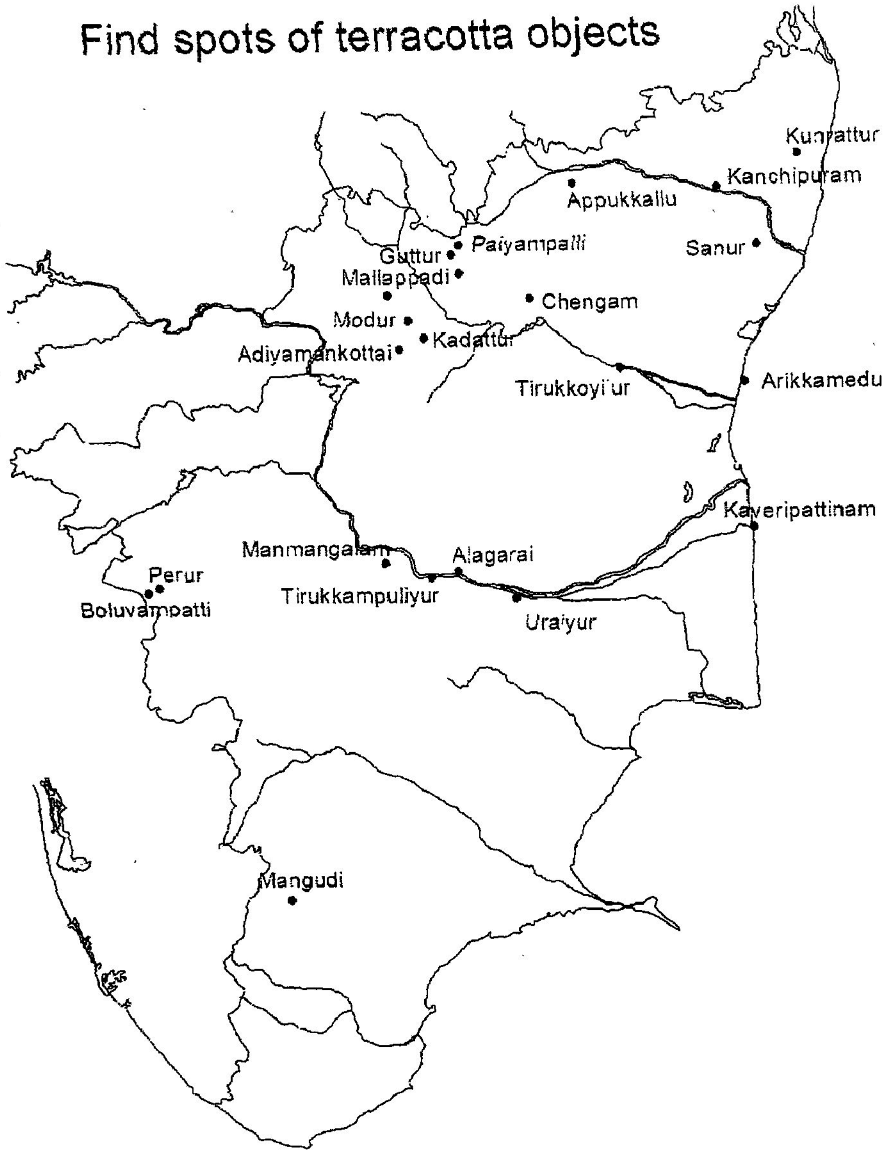
7. *Cilappatikāram*, 28, (*Natukarkātai*), line 44.
8. *Maṇimēkalai*, 18, (*utayakumāran ampalam pukka kātai*), line 33.
9. *Ibid.*, 6, (*cakkravālak kōttamuraitta kātai*), ll. 59. (*cutumanōṅgiya netunilaik kōttam*).
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Cilappatikāram*, p. 154

Find spots of terracotta objects



CHAPTER 4

TERRACOTTA ART IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY

During the last few decades several excavations were conducted in Tamilnadu. The Archaeological Survey of India, Government Museum, Chennai, and the Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil conducted these excavations. The Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, Chennai, and the Department of Archaeology and Epigraphy, Tamil University, Thanjavur excavated several sites. These excavations brought to light several terracotta figurines. Reports of some of the excavations were partly reported and many are still to be published. Some stray discoveries of terracotta were also reported in these years. The materials from all the excavations and also of stray finds were utilized in the preparation of the following account. Some of the figurines, which are in private collections and accessibility to those artifacts were denied, have not been included.

In the excavation reports so far published some useful materials are available with regard to stratigraphy and chronology, besides a note on their style and technique. Those terracotta objects collected from the systematic archaeological excavations provide the most important materials for dating, since they were obtained from the stratigraphical context. Therefore they are to be considered as the most reliable source materials. In the case of stray finds it is difficult to place them in the proper historical context. However not all excavations were published in full. Similarly, the stray finds from field visits were also not reported properly. Therefore the material available at our disposal is not complete and conclusions cannot be drawn on the fragmentary evidence.

Early Terracottas

As said earlier, the art of making images in terracotta in the Indian sub continent was known from the proto historic period. In the Tamil country also the evidence for the emergence of the terracotta art is known from the Neolithic period. However, the objects unearthed from these sites are numerically few owing to the limited excavations of neolithic sites. Paiyyampalli (Southern Circle, Archaeological Survey of India.), in the Vellore district, the only Neolithic site excavated till recent times, has provided few terracotta

objects. Since, the excavation report was not published details of the artifacts found in this site are not available for study. However, from the short account published by the excavator, we can understand that beads made of terracotta, and one terracotta figurine of long horned variety of cattle (*fig.38*) were the terracotta objects collected from Neolithic levels.[1] The Neolithic level here has been dated on the c14 showing to 1590 B.C. (1390+/_ 200 B.C.).

In a recent excavation at Modur[2] (Dharmapuri dist.), the archaeologists of the Department of Archaeology (AGT), Government of Tamilnadu collected one female figurine (*fig.36*). According to the excavators the figure was found in the neolithic level from trench MDR 11. It is a solid figure and exhibits archaic form of modeling. Portions below the hip and both the hands are broken. In the modeling of the image the artisans employed the appliqué technique. The breasts were modeled with the addition of lumps of clay. The back of the figure is plain. The figure has been compared with similar ones found in the Kulli valley in Afghanistan.

Meglithic Terracottas

Megalithic burials in Tamilnadu have yielded a small number of terracottas. They were collected from places like Sanur, and Kunnattur (Kanchipuram dist..). Some of the art pieces were collected as stray finds during the field survey. The corresponding habitation deposits and early historic levels have provided a good number of terracotta figurines. Megalithic levels at Paiyyampalli also yielded some beads and bangles of terracotta and figurines of birds (*fig.39*) and animals.[3]

The megalithic burials at Kunnattur (Kanchipuram dist.) did not yield any terracotta figurines. However the corresponding habitation levels close to the burials yielded terracotta figurines and a seal depicting an animal. These figures were not described in the report.[4] At Sanur also the burials did not yield any terracotta objects. The only terracotta figurine discovered from this site was from the cairn filling of one of the megliths (no. 2). It was an ill baked and unidentified animal with broken head and legs and a constricted belly (*fig.47*). Apart from this solitary figure, terracotta beads were the other objects of terracotta reported from here.[5] The urn burial site at Amirthamangalam (Tiruvallur Dist.) also did not yield any terracotta human figurines(3 B.C.). In the megaliths at Nilgiris a human figure of a mourner was found.[6]

At Kadattur (Dharmapuri dist.) about six terracotta figurines were recovered from a megalithic cist. Of these, three figurines were studied by M.K. Dhavalikar [7] Of the three figurines two are complete except for broken limbs and the third one is a fragment of a male

head. The figurines are rather coarse in fabric. They are backed to a light red colour. The modeling is somewhat crude and the figures are considerably worn out.

The first one is a standing female figure (*fig.17*), modeled on hand. It has a snub nose, large narrow or rather slit eyes, thin lips and a narrow forehead. It has small and round breasts. The waist is a little narrow and the navel is indicated by a small hole. It has a flattened head and wears a neck ornament. According to Dhavalikar the neck ornament was similar to the central Asian ones and was introduced into India by the Scythians. Therefore the figurine could be dated to 1 B.C.-A.D. The second one is seated male figure (*fig.15*) with stretched out legs with hands raised. The facial features are considerably worn out. According to Dhavalikar, the figure is of Scythian soldier on the basis of its straight nose, thin lips, narrow slit eyes and high cheek bones and thick moustache and a beard. He appears to wear a domical hear dress, similar to the one depicted in an early painting in cave x at Ajanta. The third figurine (*fig.16*) is a broken male head with broad flat nose, thick lips and wide bulging eyes. He wears a head-dress similar to a *kulla* of a Paithan. On this basis the figures is identified as that of a foreigner or a tribal from the northwestern frontier regions and dated to the early centuries of the Christian era. Dhavalikar infers that these megalithic terracottas have close affinity with the Satavahana terracottas.

Historical Terracottas

A considerable number of terracotta figurines assignable to the historic period are found and reported from several excavations. Determining the chronological context of these figurines is important for a study to understand the development of this ancient art. However, due to various factors, ascribing an undisputed date to the figurines is not an easy task. In the case of excavated artifacts, we can depend on the stratigraphy and each object could be placed in a best suited time bracket. In the case of terracottas obtained from surface, such a stratigraphical reasoning could not be followed. In the case of stone and metal sculptures the style or an art form has been taken as a guide to determine the chronology. Such a traditional form or style has not been identified in the case of the terracotta figurines so far. Moreover we get several terracotta pieces designed in archaic form and technique. Some are rendered in a crude way and others are finely modeled superb art pieces. Some of the terracotta art pieces rendered in modern times also exhibit such archaic form and style. These ideas and other reasons could suggest that some sort of cautious approach is needed to determine the chronology of the terracotta pieces. In the following survey all the terracotta pieces found in early historical period (1-3 A.D..) to the late medieval period (9-13 A.D..) are described site wise.

1.Adiyamankottai (Dharmapuri dist.)

Two female heads were reported from the excavation by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras (AHA). The first one (*fig.1*) is a beautiful image of a female, whose features are well delineated and moulded. The image has a simple head-dress, and long ear lobes burdened with heavy *kundalas* and wears a necklace and bangles. She has a sharp nose line and thin lips. Her smiling countenance adds charm to the figure. In her two upraised hands she holds some attributes, which are not clearly discernible. The right arm from the shoulder is broken. However it could be suggested that the female was holding a baby in her right arm, which is damaged. Another image of a small child, in a crawling position was found. The figure of Hanuman was also reported from this site. They could belong to the early medieval period.[8]

2.Alagarai (Tiruchirappalli dist.)

The excavation (AHA) yielded several terracotta objects.[9] Among those objects the image of Ganesa is interesting. The seated image of Ganesa was broken in the bust portion. However part of the tusk of Ganesa is clearly seen.(*fig.2*) The attributes in his hands are not clearly visible. He has a flat belly, and is without ornamentation. The human head has been identified as a male head (*fig.3*). It has a broad face and sides and chin portions were broken. The right ear has a hanging ear lobe which was broken at the bottom. The hair is arranged in a simple fashion and most of it was damaged. These two figures could be assigned to the early medieval period and dated to about 10th century A.D.[10] The other objects discovered at Alargarai are some toy objects, weights, beads, and gamesmen.

3.Andippatti (Tiruvannamalai dist.)

Excavations at Andippatti[11] (AGT) brought to light about 194 terracotta objects. Notable among them are three female figurines. One of them described as mother goddess (10 x 8 cms.) was a charming female bust (*fig.4*), the lower torso from her stomach is missing. It was a solid hand made figurine, with well marked features. She has a decorated head-dress, supported by a broad fillet. She has abnormally long ear lobes hanging far below her shoulders and upto the upper chest. She has a necklace and bangles. She has been depicted with some peculiar characteristics. Her teeth are shown protruding from the mouth and in her left hand she holds a small fish. In this case this figurine could be compared with another figurine biting a fish in her mouth, discovered from Kaverippattinam. K.V. Soundara Rajan, has suggested that the figure could be Varahi, citing north Indian traditions.[12] Therefore we may suggest that the Andippatti figurine could

be an image of Varahi. The other figurine is also a female (6 x3 cms) figure, described as mother goddess. It has long ear lobes and wears a head-dress. This is a beautiful piece with an oval face. It is broken from the neck portion. Another female torso (4 x6 cms) found here has been identified as an image of Durga (?). It is a hand modeled solid figure. All the above figurines could be dated to about the early medieval period (600 A.D.)

An interesting terracotta object was the image of a bull with its hump well marked. Spindle whorls, ear ornaments, gamesmen, and smoking pipes were the other terracotta objects unearthed here. Some of these objects were found in the early levels also (1-3 centuries A.D.)

4. Appukkallu (Vellore dist.)

Terracotta figurines obtained from Appukkallu (AHA) could be dated to the Megalithic and Early historical periods. One female torso (*fig.5*) obtained from here shows some archaic features and could be assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era. It was crudely modeled with hand and the tubular body was painted with dark black colour. The head and hands are broken. The two big breasts were fixed with the torso by applique method.

A red coloured, hand moulded female bust (*fig.6*) with elaborate hair do with well-plaited hair hanging on her back was another figurine, which could be assigned to the early historical period. Her face is well featured but the eyes are marked with two curved lines. She has hanging long ear lobes and wears several neck ornaments. She has prominent breasts. Both her hands and the part below the breasts are broken. Another figurine is a seated female (*fig.7*), holding her right hand on her right lap. She wears a neck ornament which is much worn out. She also wears a leg ornament. It is red in colour and hand modeled. The left portion is damaged.

A crawling figure of a baby (*fig.8*) with a decorated waistband was another important figurine. The head and parts below the knee are broken. It has well shaped thighs. The child has tucked in his belt a small knife. The crawling baby is generally misunderstood as an image of Krishna or Balakrishna. The small hand moulded crawling baby images were votive objects donated to temple mostly be women for fulfilling a wish or after a safe delivery of a Child.

5.Aravakkurichhi (Karur dist.)

One figure of a seated mother (*fig.9*) was collected from surface. The figurine is brick red in colour and possibly painted. It is made of fine grained clay. The head is broken

and missing. The woman is holding a child in her left arm, which comfortably sits on her hip and holding her breast. The right arm rests on the right knee. Her drapery is shown through parallel grooves and incised lines. The figurines could be assigned to the early medieval period (10th c. A.D.).[13]

6.Arikkamedu (Puduchcherry)

In Arikkamedu (ASI) several figurines of terracotta were collected from excavation (1945). A few fragments of decorative pieces, and few gaming pieces were also collected. They are all dated to the early centuries of the Christian era. Two terracotta figurines were found from the stratified deposits[14], assignable to the pre Arretine and Arretine periods (1 B.C. – 1 A.D.). The first one is a headless standing torso of a female figure in the round (*fig.10*). The right arm is pendant while the left holds a basket of seeds or fruits (?). The figure is heavily draped, the right end of the *sari* being tucked up and wound around the waist. The second one is also headless torso of a female in the round (*fig.12*). The figure is also heavily draped and the folds in her garment were well delineated. Its hands as well as legs are broken. Both the figurines are dated to the 1st century A.D.

There are about five human figurines and a damaged image of Siva collected from unstratified levels during the pre 1945 excavations. The one torso of male is in nude. The pendant right hand holds a hook like object and the left a large indistinct object against the hip. The figure wears a thick necklace with pendants and a girdle of pellets. The broken head of male is much defaced. The hair is curled and hangs below the ears.

An image of Siva (*fig.11*) was found in the pre 1945 excavation in unstratified levels. It was broken and only the head portion is available. The oval face has a serene look and the eyes are half closed. The features are beautifully modeled. The high conical mass of matted hair is entwined by a serpent, and its forepart bears a crescent. This could be assigned tentatively to early medieval period.

Lower portions of two female figures standing on round pedestals were also obtained from here. They are clad in loose skirts, which cover part of the feet and only the toes are visible. The third torso of the female also exhibits similar features. However the pedestal seems to have been damaged. One piece of a damaged hand was also found here. It is broken hand of a human, upraised, wearing a bangle and holding a stalk of a flower in its fingers. These figurines could be dated to early medieval period.

7.Boluvampatti (Coimbatore dist.)

In the excavation conducted by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu (1980), several terracotta figurines were collected.[15] They are dated to the 8th century A.D. One figure, identified as yaksha (*fig.13*), is a beautiful image of a naked child in the usual seated position with a decorated head-dress. The features are beautifully modeled. The child wears a turbun like head ornament with its top portion arranged neatly in a fan like decoration. The broad and thick turban is otherwise plain. He has a pleasing countenance with well moulded features. He wears a close fitting necklace and the pendant ears are decorated with ornaments touching the upper chest of the baby. The *udarabanda* was beautifully modeled with large sized beads. Unfortunately the figure is damaged and both the hands from the lower arms were broken and portions below the right hip and left leg are also lost. The figure need not be identified with Yaksha since no attributes of yaksha are represented. It could be a votive image of a child, donated to a temple by a mother after fulfilling a vow.

Among the other terracotta objects discovered from the excavation one terracotta seal is interesting. It has figures of a tiger, bow, fish and a lamp with an indistinct legend around the figures. Part of the legend has been read as "varmanah".[16]

In the exploration conducted earlier at this site a few figurines were collected.[17] One of the figures is a male head (*fig.14*), broken below the neck, which could be datable to the 8th century A.D. It was made of fine and well levigated clay. It is well modeled, and appears with calm face, half closed eyes, and perfectly shaped ears. Its hair is arranged in small coils, as in the images of Buddha. On the basis of these features it has been identified as the figure of Buddha and suggested the influence of the Gandhara school of Buddhist art by Sridharan.[18]

8.Guttur (Dharmapuri dist.)

Animal and human figurines[19] were reported from the excavation conducted by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, in 1983. The female head exhibits good workmanship with well marked eyes and prominent nose. The image could be dated to the early historical period. Well decorated smoking pipes were the other terracotta pieces unearthed in this site.

9.Kanchipuram (Kanchipuram dist.)

Kanchipuram, the celebrated capital city of the Pallavas, was excavated by three institutions, namely, Archaeological Survey of India[20] (Southern Circle, 1954, 1962-63),

Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras (1970-1976), and Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu (1970-71). The number of terracotta figurines unearthed in all the excavations could be more than 30 pieces.[21] They could be chronologically assigned to the Early historical, and early medieval periods. The terracotta objects were beautifully prepared from hand. Some are prepared in moulds. A few pieces of women torsos and pieces of crawling child were obtained. Some broken pieces of animal torso, gamesmen, decorative pieces and pieces of lamps were the other terracotta objects collected. A few broken pieces of coin moulds of terracotta, used in the making of coins, were the other terracotta objects collected from the excavation.

Among the human heads, four pieces exhibit fine workmanship. One of the pieces (*fig.18*) was a mould made one with rounded face and protruding chin, but part of it was damaged. The eyes are marked with two curved lines. The hair is arranged in neat folds and tied in the middle obviously with a band and at the top by a beautiful fan like plume. The other three pieces with similar features portray charming countenance with beautifully decorated fanned plume. The long ear lobes are noticeable in some figures, but due to the damaged condition the nature of ear ornaments could not be distinguished. These figures could be dated to the beginning centuries of the Christian era.

One human head (*fig.19*) with some marked differences from the earlier ones was made out of double mould. Its features are well delineated, with the prominent and rounded nose and the hanging ear lobes, portraying a smiling countenance. The hair was arranged beautifully by neat folds and tied into a top knot with the two sides of the knot hanging on both the sides. The figurine seems to have been painted with white pigment over which the red colour seems to have been applied.[22]

Another human head (*fig.20*) with elaborate headdress was made out of a double mould. It exhibits the hollow inner core. It has a charming face and wears a fillet with a rounded medallion on its forehead. The elaborate head-dress looks like a crown. Its features are well modeled. Another head (*fig.21*) exhibits fine workmanship. Its nose and parts of ears are broken. The eyes are indicated by deep lines. The head-dress is quite interesting. The hair is neatly arranged in small plaits, which are shown on the figures as slender lines. The top of the head-dress is also damaged. Another human figurine (*fig.23*) with well modeled features was made out of double mould. Though the features were beautifully shaped, the face got damaged when the clay was still wet. The eyes are shown as two curved lines.

Three male torsos with its features of the body well modeled by hand were collected from here. In all the three figures the body was shown in a seated position. However in two

figures the legs and hands are partly broken. One figure (*fig.24*) could be identified as a small boy is a seated position. His hands and head are broken. Two more seated figures of small children were also found. One was solid and the other was made in a double mould and shows the hollow interior. The solid figure (*fig.22*) of the female child has a well decorated girdle. The other figure was modeled in a double mould and the inner core is hollow. These images could be votive figures donated by parents, after being endowed with a child.

Three small sized female busts (*fig.25*) with hands, heads are broken, show the modeling and decorative skill of the terracotta artists. All these figurines were made of moulds and show the well shaped female form. These figurines have thick neck ornaments. Probably they are the mother and child figurines donated by the mothers as votive objects.

10.Kaveripattinam (Nagapattinam dist.)

In Kaveripattinam (ASI. Southern Circle), terracottas[22] were collected from two sites, namely Pallavanesvaram and Vellaiyaniruppu. A few terracotta pieces collected from the lower levels of Pallavanesvaram could be dated to around the early fourth century A.D.

Pallavanesvaram (Kilaiyur, Buddhist Vihara site)

Two male figurines obtained from Pallavanesvaram are dated to the pre 3 century A.D. Among them the one male figure (*fig.26*) was modeled with a high turban and ornamental jewellery on the forehead along the hair line. The turban is indicated by oblique incised slashes. The eyes are large and elongated. K.V. Sundara Rajan suggests that this figure could represent the Ikshvaku tradition of clay art. Another figurine of a male torso (*fig.29*) was moulded in an inferior fabric, and appears to be a figure of a warrior on whose back is strung a quiver. He is shown wearing multiple neck ornaments. The body is draped around the hips with a kind of cross-belt (*channavīra*) going across the chest, around the hip, and the back.

Among the female torsos, the one figurine is with curled hair, ear ornaments, a necket and another ornament hanging between her breasts. The influence of Sunga Kushana style of art is advocated for this figurine (*fig.27*). The second female figurine (*fig.28*) is the lower torso from belly downwards, shows the diaphanous drapery on the thighs. The fragmentary torso reveals the transitional style of the Kushana to Gupta tradition.

Some figurines datable to the post 3 A.D. were also reported from the excavation at Pallavanesvaram. One beautiful head is with a top knot (*dhammilla*), unfortunately broken, fasten by a strap-like device, and decorated with jewelled band represented by pierced dot incisions. The face is modeled with great charm with the well curved forehead and

converging eyebrows and well formed lips and chin. These features are compared to the tradition of the late Gupta period.

Among the images of divinities represented from the excavation are one figurine (*fig.30*) appears to hold a fish in her mouth (?) is quite interesting. This curious figure could be identified with Varahi (?) on a comparison with similar figures found in north India, where she used to hold a fish in her mouth.[23]

Another female figurine is of poor modeling with rich jewellery and decoration and shoulder clasp and necklets with pendant of miniature auspicious symbols like swastika etc. Its arms are plump and smoothly curved shoulder at the elbow as if holding something in the fore arm. According to K.V.Soundara Rajan, the pendant could be compared to the pendants shown in some figures of Nagarjunakonda tradition and he has identified with one of the Yaksha figures in Pitalkhora.

A figure of right foot with the anklet decorated with five jingles (*kinkini*) on its front part was a large sized terracotta figure obtained here. According to the excavators, the height of the full figure would be about 20 cms., and on the basis of this figure, it has been suggested that the production of large sized foot at the terminal phase in the late Mahayanist times when several divinities were created under Buddhism. Another foot of medium size shows a fragmentary fore part of the foot. Here the right foot supported by a pedestal like arrangement which has a hollow body. The foot could be guessed as a pedestal for fixing the figure of either a Buddha or Bhodhisatva.

A hand in *kataka mudra* with very sensitive finger modeling in the two middle fingers bent and touching the palm while the index finger at the nail level. On comparison with the other Buddha figures, the hand is identified with that of Buddha in the *Dharmachakrapravartana mudra*.

Vellaiyan Iruppu (Kilaiyur)

The figurines at Vellaiyan Iruppu by their class and stylistic character pertain mainly to the brahmanical or Hindu divinities. A fragmentary head shows the converging eyebrows, large eyes, full lips. In the ear, it supports an ornament, which is thicker on the left side and unidentifiably worn out on the right but perhaps similar. The forehead shows some treatment of jewellery over the backswept hair. The rear side of the figure forms a vertical flat surface. This is an imitation of the usage current for the stone relief figure of divinities placed in niches where they have no rear side carving in the round but only frontal relief.

One cult figure is a seated divinity with a rather bulging belly bound by a belt and with circlets shown for the nipples of the bosom, and with the available left arm flexed and taken toward the waist. This has been identified as a figure of Jyeshta or Hariti.

Another important figure was a figure of a monk with a round head showing strands of hair swept backwards, with prominent forehead band and ear rings. The style of this figure was in keeping with the general folk style of this period where the nose is usually punched, the lips incised, and the eyes shown popping out from under the eye-brows and shown by incision.

One more figure is that of seated god or goddess with a prominent belly and heavy short thighs and legs hanging down. These were of Yaksha or such figures known from the earlier periods onwards at this site. The second one (*fig.31*) was a torso showing considerable controlled modulation with two arms moving out of the shoulder but broken at that point and two legs shown in perhaps seated position with the legs folded across. The back of the body was also rendered with restraint and plainness. The genital organ is shown but it is somewhat mutilated. This figure has been identified as representing the Yogi divinity like Lakulisa of the Pasupata-Kalamukha sect.

A female figure whose bosom part above had survived, with the usual flattened rear side and multiple concentric necklaces adorning the chest, of which the lowest was resting between the breasts. The subdued modeling of the piece was in the best traditions of the contemporary stone sculptures of the eleventh-twelfth century A.D.

A pedestal of medium size with four mouldings rendered in free style on the top of which was a figure of a pair of feet damaged but suggesting that it was a standing figure.

According the K.V. Soundara Rajan all the figures from Vellaiyan Iruppu II clearly show a break from the traditions of the earlier period. The rise of this tradition and simultaneously of multiple folk cults affiliated to the now dominant brahmanical religion, though with a sprinkling of the Buddhist cult position also, though these are inferior, in fabric and rendering, to the earlier ones, fully reflect the period from the ninth to the twelfth century A.D.[24]

11.Kulagattur (Dharmapuri dist.)

Two images were reported from the mound locally known as Thamukamedu (AGT). They were collected from a trench, at a depth of about 5' below the surface. One of the figures is a female, (*fig.33*) which was hand modeled and the back is plain and devoid of any modeling. Only the head portion was found and the torso is missing. Her facial features were beautifully modeled with wide eyes and smiling lips. The hair is well combed into

small plaits and the spaces between them are decorated with small pellets. However the front upper portion of the head is damaged. The image has traces of red colour.[25] Another figure of a female (*fig.32*), similar to the one described above was also collected from this site. The head portion of the figure is found and the torso not available. The features are well delineated. However the lower portion of the chin is damaged. The hair is arranged neatly and secured into a small bun on the back. It seems to have been modeled by hand. Both the figures are dated to the 8th century A.D on stylistic grounds.

12.Mallapadi (Dharmapuri dist.)

The terracotta objects collected include a broken head rest, a female torso, gamesmen, ear rings, beads, smoking pipes, lamps, spindle whorls, hopscotches and dabbers. The head rest is interesting and could suggest a Neolithic environment. The female torso was that of a mother holding in her two arms a baby and feeding from her breast. It was prepared in a double mould, and the head portion is completely lost. A small necklace is faintly shown around her neck. It lacked good modeling and finishing. The figurine could be assigned to the early historical period.

13.Mangudi (Tirunelveli dist.)

At Mangudi,[26] (AGT) one female torso (*fig.34*) was obtained from the lowermost level, dated to the early Christian era (I-3 A.D.). In spite of the damaged head, hands and parts below her hip, the solid female figurine has been charmingly modeled. She has been richly decorated with neck ornaments and ear rings which hung upto her shoulders. Her lower garment is shown with folds. Apart form this female torso the excavation yielded terracotta lamps, spindle whorls, beads and about eight terracotta gamesmen.

14.Manmangalam (Karur dist.)

Three images were discovered in a small mound, locally known as Kottaimedu in the village[27] during the road laying operation. Two of the female figurines (*fig.35*) are rendered in seated position holding a child on their hips. These figurines were hand modeled and features are crudely rendered. Both the figurines wear the lower garments only. The third female figure is in seated position wearing ear ornaments and a necklace. These are dated between 11th and 13th centuries A.D. by Abdul Majeed on comparative grounds. Due to the coarse modeling of the figurines, they could be assigned to late 13th century A.D. These figures could be considered as votive objects donated by devotees.

15.Modur (Dharmapuri dist.)

The excavation at Modur (AGT) unearthed about eight terracotta objects. One of the objects was a female figurine obtained from the Neolithic levels and described earlier. The other female figure [28] assignable to the early historical level is described below. It is a hand made solid figurine (*fig.37*) of a standing female in the round with its backside devoid of any modeling. She is rendered with a round face and long pendant ear lobes which carry heavy ornaments. She also wears bangles on her hands. Her features were clearly modeled in a subdued manner. Her hair is well arranged and finished with a flat bun on top of her head. A big diadem decorate her front head. Her right hand is broken, while her left hand rests at the right hip. No drapery could be noticed on her body. She has been identified as a female deity by the excavators. However a close look at the features of the figurine suggests that it was a votive object. The standing posture, with a slightly leaning attitude, and the bulging belly could suggest that she was a pregnant woman. The female figure could be considered as a product of the early historical period on account of the modeling.

The other objects made of terracotta collected from Modur are a figure of ram, smoking pipes, ear ornaments, spindle whorls, a mould, lamps, beads and gamesmen (dice) made of terracotta

16.Panaiyakulam (Dharmapuri dist.)

Four terracotta figurines were collected from Panaiyakulam (AGT). Among the figurines, the female figure (*fig.40*), with its right hand broken, shows some archaic workmanship. The left hand is kept close to the belly. It is decorated with head and neck ornaments. It is dated[29] to the 2nd Century A.D. (?) but could be placed in the early medieval period.

The second one is a solid figure of a female (*fig.42*), made out of well levigated clay. The female bust is broken below the waist and has well marked eyes and lips. The left hand is also broken, while the right is stretched forward. The fingers are not well displayed but shown as a small lump. The hair is arranged in plaits and secured at the top as a small knot, which is partly broken. It has hanging ear lobes, and wears a neck ornament. Thick red slip seems to have applied on the body. It is dated to the 8th century A.D. Another broken figure (*fig.41*) of a female with somewhat similar features is also reported from this site.[30] The features on the face are very much damaged. Her breasts and both the hands are also damaged. All the figures could be dated to the early medieval period on stylistic grounds.

17. Perur (Coimbatore dist.)

Three terracotta figurines[31] were unearthed (AGT) from this site. The other objects collected are a few spindle whorls, beads, terracotta lamps, smoking pipes and gamesmen. The female figurine (height : 3 cm.) is crudely modeled with a big rounded face and a short body. It has a prominent nose, thick lips, and knotted hair. She is carrying a child on her lap. The seated figurine has been identified as mother goddess by the excavators. However. such female figurines carrying on its lap a child need not be considered as a deity. It must be considered as a votive figure deposited in the temple after fulfilling the wish of a mother.

The second figure is a female figure, with her hands held in *anjali*. Her right half of the face and shoulders and also the lower portion below her belly were broken. In her folded hands she wears a bunch of bangles. Though the figure was lacking charm and beauty, it has been tastefully modeled. It has been identified as a devotee. The third figurine has been identified as a image of yaksha. It is a broken figure of human head, and with the damaged figure it could not be identified with yaksha. Only the upper part of the head represented by eyebrows and the head-dress are found intact. It has a charming and well decorated head-dress. Since all the three figures were collected in the lower levers these figurines could be assigned to the early historical period, 1 -3 A.D.

18. Rajalividuti (Thanjavur dist.)

Five terracotta figurines were collected from the surface. All the figures are tentatively dated to the 17th century. All the five figurines are male heads and are crudely modeled by hand. They could be arranged under three types. The first type (*fig. 43*) has the bulging eyes and prominent nose with well arranged hair. The hair is arranged as a small tuft on top of the head like the folds of a fan or simply a tuft. It is shown with big ear ornaments.[32] In the second type, the male head (*fig. 44*) exhibits similar features. The mouth and eyes are elongated and are well delineated. A thin and close fitting neck ornament is shown on its neck. It has a simple hair do. The third type (*fig. 45*) has been modeled beautifully but the features of the face are worn out. Only the head with a small tuft on it is available.

19. Saluvankuppam (Kanchipuram dist.)

The Chennai Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, excavated a part of an area on north of the Tiger Cave in the Saluvankuppam village near Mamallapuram (2004-05). Besides the terracotta plaque, other terracotta artifacts found at the site are terracotta lamps, beads, spinning whorls, a broken animal terracotta figurine and hopscotches.[33]

The terracotta plaque (*fig.46*) was hand modeled. It has five female dancers standing in a row and each one holding on to the shoulder his neighbour. This is a unique figure so far un noticed in the Tamil country. It is well backed and with crudely finished figures,. The dance pose could be considered as a dance of Kuravaik kūttu of the Sangam period. It is a dance performed in front of the Muruga temple. The plaque could have been used as a cult object.

20. Tirukkampuliyur (Tiruchirappalli dist.)

The terracotta objects from Tirukkampuliyur[34] (AHA) comprise human and animal figurines, toys, ear-ornaments, gamesmen, spindle whorls, and rings. The earliest terracotta finds belong to the first or second century A. D. Almost all the figurines were hand made. An interesting point is that no figurine was made out of a mould. Perhaps this could suggest that the craftsmen have not understood the technique of making figurines using moulds. A few terracotta objects show no slip, decoration or paint. But in one or two figurines micaceous paint could be noticed. In the example of the figurine of acarya or Balakrishna figurine one may notice a thick black slip applied uniformly all over the surface.

According to the excavators the earliest datable human figurine on the basis of modeling and style is the hand made mother goddess figurine (*fig.48*). It belonged to the second or third century A. D. It has a thick and stumpy body, the naval is shown by a prominent hole in the middle of the belly. The figure wears an ornamental girdle of pinched design. It is suggested that similar Mother Goddess figurines were found at Ahichchhatra.[35] They belong to the period c. 300-200 B. C. It is suggested that features of the Mother Goddess figurine from Tirukkampuliyur are similar to those found at Ahichchhatra and therefore the figure was assigned to the 1st century A.D.

There are two figurines of children. One of the figurines was stratigraphically the earliest. It was seated figure of a child (*fig.49*). This has been identified as the figure of Vishnu on account of the raised hand. The solid figure has well proportioned chest and short arms. The head is missing and the left arm is broken for the most part, but the raised right arm is preserved nearly in full. It wears a thick banded, round necklace around its neck. The second figurine (*fig.50*) of a child has a round face, short neck, broad shoulders, long ears, very prominent eye brows and nose. The eyes are well marked and wide open. There are holes in the ear lobes suggesting that the figure originally wore ear-ornaments suspended from those holes. The hair is shown by small incised circles and the hair is done with a top-knot. A small hole is pierced on to the top knot. It was solid and stumpy figure of a child, neatly modeled and painted in black. Considering these aspects this the figure

was identified as an Acharya or teacher of Buddhist or Jaina sect or Balakrishna. However this is not tenable since the top knot suggests that it was a figure of a child. In this connection it may be mentioned that even today painted terracotta figures of crawling baby or seated child are presented to the temple by parents to fulfill their vows.

Among two human heads obtained, the one head is of hand made and well modeled with mutilated nose and displaying charming features (*fig.51*). The eyes are drawn with two pairs of curves and the ears are in shallow relief and are modeled by pinching method. The hair, shown by curved lines was tied with a small band and secured with a fan-like plume. The image is coated with a pale rose lime paste, traces of which are visible at some places. This head was compared with similar finds of the Gupta period. Another figurine with an impressive head-dress and oval face, with a large eye-ridge and raised brows with well marked eye-balls also to be considered with the above figure. Considering the bulging and slightly hanging thick lips it was suggested as displaying the qualities of a Negrito racial type.[36] Figures without a head-dress, are also found in Tirukkampuliyur. Two of the figures obtained were made in a crude form, representing early features. They are solid and much worn out. The features are not well marked

Among the female figurines, the figure of a mother and child is quite significant (*fig.52*). The seated woman is holding a baby in her left hip. The mother is holding her left breast in her right hand probably to feed the child. The head and the right hip and legs are damaged. The mother wears a necklace around her neck and bangles in her hand which are marked by thin and clear incisions. Traces of the red slip are seen on the left half of the figure. Figures like this are donated to temples by mothers or family members after fulfilling a vow, mostly after the delivery of a child or for the good health of mother and child.

Figurines assignable to a later date are also found at Tirukkampuliyur. Among those was a mould made female bust (*fig.53*) made out of single mould. The mould was used for designing the front portion only. The back was treated by hand and the inner side was hollow. It is slightly bent to her right. The headless figure wears ornaments around her neck, and a *udharabandha*. A thick red slip was applied on to the figure before firing. It was identified as a dancing girl.

Tirukkampuliyur terracottas are compared to the post Gupta terracottas of Eastern India.[37] According to T.V. Mahalingam. some images were influenced by the similar art traditions in the North. The 'Mother Goddess' figurine, bears close resemblance to similar finds from Ahichchhatra. According to him, two of the male figurines show strong Negrito racial characteristics, viz. thick lips and a slightly protruding chin, characteristics of the

Dravidian people. However, we may notice that most of the figurines exhibit local idioms in their local version and was produced for the individual patrons mostly for the local consumption.

21. Tirukkoyilur (Cuddalore dist.)

Excavations by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu at Tirukkoyilur (1994), brought to light four terracotta figurines.[38] Of these figurines two were obtained in the period II (pre 400 A.D.) level and the other two were unearthed from period III (400 -1300 A.D.) level. Among the two figures assignable to the pre 400 A.D. the one is a mutilated female figure shown in a standing posture. This figure is an applique figure found on the outer portion of a big jar. It was hand made and the portion below the waist is broken. She wears ear ornaments and neck ornaments. Her two hands are spread out horizontally probably holding some objects in her hands, which is not discernible. The second figure is a mutilated human foot. The other two objects are assignable to the early medieval period (8-9 A.D.). One is a figure of female torso, with the arms and breasts are mutilated. The visible left arm shows that it was upraised probably holding some attributes. Another one is a broken portion of a left knee. It seems to have been painted with red colour.

A Male bust of a child (?) with rounded face was reported from the surface (*fig.54*). It is in a weathered condition, whose features are not clearly visible. The child is decorated with a fillet on the head. The long ears are shown with heavy ear ornaments hanging upto the shoulders. A plain necklace adorns the chest. The left arm is raised and the right is broken. It is hand made and solid and is with a red slip.[39] The above figure could be assigned to the early medieval period (8 A.D.).

22. Uraiyur (Tiruchirappalli dist.).

The excavation at Uraiyur[40] (AHA-1965-68) brought to light about 18 terracotta figurines. All of them belong to the early historical period, and are dated to 1-2 A.D. The earliest figurine (*fig.55*) is a hand made human head with a light brown colour. It has a slightly ovalish face with a plain head-dress decorated with a plain top knot. It is decorated with a fillet. The features are not well delineated. Similar figurines were discovered from the several diggings from Uraiyur. The second human head (*fig.56*) is a solid one, with well-modeled facial features. A flat fillet rests on the forehead and the head-dress arranged in the form of top knot pressed on its sides, leaving a central ridge, and pinched with a small hole in the middle. The beautiful figure has deeply marked and elongated eyes, almost

touching ears. It has a long ear lobe with a pointed chin. The other human head is almost similar to the above one. The features are not clear due to the worn out condition of the figure. Two other broken heads from here also reflect similar features. The head-dress in both the figures are little different from the others. The features were not well delineated. One male bust with an oval face was a hand made solid figurine. Its left shoulder and part of the left chest were broken. However it exhibits good workmanship.

One of the unique figurines noticed from Uraiyur is a tiny oval shaped head. It is a mould made one with a pointed nose and receding forehead and short and prominently incised eyes with deep points for pupils. The small mouth and the narrow chin are clearly marked. The neck was disproportionately long and narrow tapering to a point downwards. The way the neck has been designed suggests that it was intentional and was with a purpose. Therefore the excavators have suggested that it could have been used as a stopper for some vase, probably for a perfume vase.

A mould made head (*fig.57*) with a charming face with long ear lobes is a fine specimen of terracotta art. It exhibits the painting of red colour. Its features are well marked. The eyes are rendered with mild lines. Another mould made figure (*fig.58*) with a fine workmanship and with a fine red slip has a lovely and fleshy face with narrow receding forehead. The pupil is indicated by a circle. The smiling figure bears traces of a head-dress. A large sized human head with a fleshy face and well marked features was another figurine made from a mould. The eyes and other features were marked with deep incision. Its nose is damaged.(*fig.60*)

A few female torsos found in Uraiyur deserve our attention. The one was a crudely hand made and its breasts were made by pinching method. The body consists of a disproportionately long belly, waist and hip is more or less in one and same alignment without any curve. From the hip two short straight legs branches off. The head, neck and the arms are broken. Similar crude figurines are found in other ancient sites also where it is dated to the pre 2 century B.C. It could be a votive figure.

The other female torso is a solid figure with well moulded features (*fig.59*). and also of solid ones. Though its head was broken, it exhibits fine workmanship in conception and execution. The ornaments and drapery are well executed. The neck ornament is shown by a series of small square pendants hanging on to a thread. The drapery of the figure is shown by two lines running from the left shoulder flowing between the breasts and ending on the right hip. Just below the breasts radiate semi-circular bands indicating a transparent upper garment or breast band. The slim and supple right arm hanging down from the

shoulder is executed in a delicate manner. A few other female torsos were collected. They also exhibit similar features.

A few figures of lower torso were found. They are with the legs and the upper portions are damaged. Among these figures, one was beautifully modeled (*fig. 61*) whereas the others are crudely made (*fig.62*). The limbs are not proportionately designed and the foot was made into a mass merging all the toes. This crude representation suggests that these figures were not modeled with the care it required. Perhaps these figures are the crawling/seated children, usually offered by parents to the temples after the delivery of a child.

23. Uttamanayakkan Palayam (Dindugal dist.)

One figure of seated mother holding her child in her left arm was collected from the surface (*fig.63*). The portion below the belly is broken. The figure seems to have been painted (?) with brick red clolour. She is naked and the features are crudely modeled. The eyes are wide with long eyebrows while the nose is flat and broad. She has slightly opened mouth with thick lips. Her hair was tightly arranged and finished in a small bun. She has shown with neck ornaments and armlets. In her elongated ear she wears heavy ear rings, which alomost touch her shoulders. The *udarabandha* like belt is shown but it could be the folds of her stomach. The child hugging on her hip exhibits poor modeling. On stylistic grounds the figure may be assigned to 11-12th century A.D.[41]

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CHAPTER 5

ANIMAL FIGURINES

Among the numerous animal figurines reported from excavations in Tamilnadu, the earliest of them could be a small head of a deer, obtained from Paiyyampalli. It has two short horns on its head. Since only the head part of the animal was reported we could not understand the purpose and utility of the figurine. In the megalithic burial site at Sanur a broken image of a bull (?) was found[2]. At Paiyyampalli, the megalithic levels yielded figurines of birds and animals.[3] However the details are not provided in the report. The lids of the megalithic pottery were provided with bird figures to hold and lift the lid. Numerous such lids were discovered from various excavations. Some of the sarcophagi used in the megalithic burials were shaped like an animal. The upper section of the convex lid of the sarcophagus was usually shaped in the form of a ram with short horns. Other zoomorphic types represented are cow and elephant.[4]

Animal figurines belonging to historical period were reported from several excavations. From Tirukkampuliyur,[5] seven terracotta figurines of rat and a head of a bird were unearthed. The rats are small in size and vary from 4.5 to 5 cms. They have been considered as *vahana* of Ganesa and therefore it was observed that they were also objects of woship in the early period. The figure of the bird was partly broken below the neck. It is coarse and devoid of any slip. The eyes of the bird are pierced by two holes. The bird could have been part of a ceramic vessel, especially used as a knob on lid. Some of these figures could be dated to the early historical period (1-3 A.D.).

Several animal figures were reported from Vellaiyan iruppu at Kaveripattinam.[6] A parrot was one of the figurines found. Four figures of ram of almost identical in shape were discovered from here. It has been pointed out that these images of ram could be related to Karthikeya or Subrahmanya and are to be considered as votive objects gifted to the shrine of Karthikeya. Another figure of Garuda with the characteristic crown, ear ornaments, and a prominent beaked nose, with the face flattened out was discovered in the later levels. The image of Garuda also to be considered as a votive object since it was the mount of Vishnu. Figures of elephant representing Ganesa were also found here. These are also to be

considered as votive images. Naga figures with two headed cobras were also discovered at this site.

From Modur a figure of an animal was unearthed. It is a hand made figurine with a short snout, bulging body, and tubular and lumpy legs, without any horns.. This has been identified as a ram.[7] Mangudi has yielded one figure of horned bull.[7]

Andippatti has yielded a few animal figurines. These objects include a broken head of an elephant, bull (?) and a figure of a rat. One terracotta pedestal obtained from here has beautiful representations of a row of elephants. Unfortunately the pedestal was broken. An interesting object from Andippatti was a figurine of bull. It has a rounded belly with its hump and short horns well marked. The four stumpy legs are modeled in tubular form as found in the legged jars of the megalithic burials. There was no opening but a small hole provided on the back of the animal. There is no doubt that it was designed as a bull. In explaining the significance of this animal figurine, the excavators have suggested that it could be a burial pot used for putting the remains of the dead, like bones and ashes. However the excavators have informed that there were no bones or ashes in the belly of the bull.[8] Since the animal figurine was unearthed in a habitation area, it could not have been used as a burial pot. On the other hand it could be considered as a bull figurine and was used as a cult object, presented to temple or a place of worship for some service or for fulfilling a wish of a devotee. Such animal figures like horses and elephants are donated to temples of village deities. An important aspect of the animal is that it has a hole on its hind part. This hole is always provided by the professional craftsmen while making potteries or images in the round. This hole will enable the escape of the air trapped inside the pot or image during the process of firing in a kiln. If no hole is provided, the artifact will brake due to the expansion of the air inside due to heat.

Images of rat, ram, bull and elephant were the animal species represented so far. Several bird figurines were also obtained. However we could not understand the real import of these images. In general they could be related to some deities and suggest that they were objects of worship either in temples or in houses. In some cases these animal and bird figurines could have been used as toys.

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CHAPTER 6

TOYS AND GAMESMEN

Toys and gaming pieces made of terracotta discovered from several excavations are useful to social historians, since they throw some interesting light on the common man's pastimes. These pieces of toys and gamesmen were not properly studied except for a short mention of these objects in the respective excavation reports.

The most commonly available toys are the tokens used to play the game of hopscotch. The tokens are inexpensive and mostly prepared by the player from a broken piece of a pottery or stone. These flat and small discs were used to select a qarter of their choice and then move to the location by hopping. Generally they are crudely made and discorded after use. Sometimes they are made with perfection and are kept by the player to use repeatedly. There are coarse and fine varities of tokens discovered from excavations. In Arikkamedu a well made out and polished hopscotch measured 3.5 cms in diameter.[1] About five hopscotch tokens were reported from Mangudi. Their stratigraphical location could suggest that all of them belonged to the early historical period (3 B.C.-1 A.D.). All the tokens of hopscotch were made out of red pottery and their edges were well ground into a neat round shape. They measure from 2.5 cms to 5.5 cms in diameter.[2] Similar tokens used in the game of hopscotch were reported from the excavations at Mödur and Andippatti.

Another commonly available toy was one similar to the above, but having two holes in the centre.[3] It is also an inexpensive toy, prepared from a broken piece of pottery. It was shaped and ground in to a disc and two holes were made in the middle. Passing a thread through the two holes, and by twisting the threads, the disc could be made to spin. Two of the above toys were reported from Arikamedu and has a diameter of 3 cms. One of the toys was broken and seems to be decorated with circles and oblique lines on the body. The two holes in the middle were made out skillfully, without much damage to the gaming piece. A cruder form of a gaming piece was obtained from Kavirippumpattinam.[4] Though the outer form was not made into a perfect circle, the two holes were made with precision and care.

Another gaming object was a dice. It is a small rectangular piece used to obtain a number. A few board games are dependent on dice. A player's move was decided on the basis of an arbitrary selection of a number obtained by throwing the dice. Single as well as double dices were used. A rectangular dice was reported from Alagankulam (AGT) excavations. Another dice was reported from Modur (5 x 1.3 cms.). The numbers were not marked on the dice.[5] A similar dice was reported from Mangudi (5 x1.5 cms.).

Unlike the toys mentioned above a large number of cylindrical pieces of terracotta were unearthed in the several excavations. They are generally tubular in structure with well shaped and painted body having a flat bottom. There are a few objects with conical and roughly hour glass section. These pieces were reported from several sites in Tamilnadu and generally described as gaming pieces or gamesmen. Though the early literature of the Tamil country mentions the use of gamesmen in their board games, the exact shape and size could not be visualized. However, we have evidence forthcoming with regard to similar gaming pieces made of wood and other materials used in several indoor games. Therefore there is no doubt that these cylindrical pieces were used as gamesmen especially in a board game.

In Arikamedu, two cylindrical pieces unearthed. They were identified as gaming pieces by the excavator.[6] One has a tubular body (4 x 2.5 cms.) and the other one with hour glass section and a conical top (2.5 x 3.5 cms.). A third one was partly broken. Kaveripattinam yielded two pieces of gamesmen, which are little different from the Arikkamedu gamesmen.[7] They are pieces with hour glass section and has a height of 2 cms. They have a flat bottom and a hemispherical top. About eleven pieces were collected in the excavations at Uraiyur.[10] Kanchipuram, yielded about seven gamesmen.[11] and Tirukkampuliyur yielded two gamesmen. Adiyamankottai, Appukkallu, Mallapadi,[12] and Kallerimalai[13] (Vellore District) also yielded a few terracotta gamesmen. Two of the Kallerimalai pieces were designed with flat bottoms, tubular bodies and with hemispherical domes. The other one is of simple design with cylindrical body and flat bottom and head. In the several excavations undertaken by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, many pieces of gamesmen were reported. From Andippatti five gamesmen were collected. Their height varied from 1.5 cms to 3.5 cms. All of them have flat bottom and cylindrical body. Modur has yielded about 5 gamesmen. About eight pieces of gamesmen were collected from Mangudi. They all represent a solid cylindrical body with a wide flat bottom and a flat top.

These cylindrical pieces are mostly dated to the early centuries of the Christian era (1-3 centuries A.D.) on the basis of stratigraphy obtained from excavations. The black and

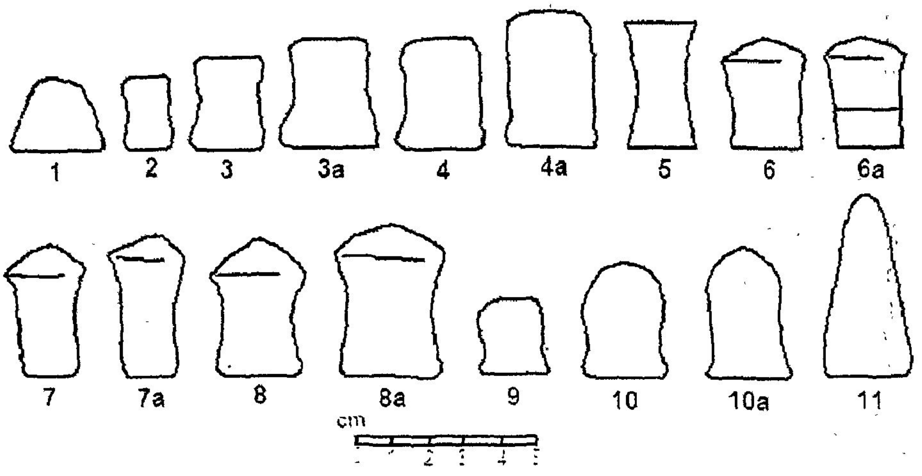
red ware and other artifacts related to the early centuries of the Christian era are found with these cylindrical pieces. In some places the dates of the pieces could be ascertained on the basis of the dates available for the charcoal samples collected from these sites.

These gamesmen were carefully made by hand from well levigated clay and burnt in a kiln. All of them are solid pieces and were shaped by skilled artisans. Some of them were found without a slip. They could be broadly divided in to two groups on the basis of its colour. One type is red and finished with surface smoothening. In the second type, whole body was painted with a thick coating of black colour before firing. The manufacturing of these pieces in two colours could suggest that they were prepared for the use of two set of players. Most of the pieces collected from the Uraiyur exhibit a very fine workmanship. Some of them have an hourglass section having a vertical body and slightly enlarging its size at the point where the tubular stem meets the conical / domical top.

The length of these pieces is not uniform. It varies from 1.5 cms. to 5 cms. The bases of these pieces are usually flat to facilitate stability for easy placing on the board while playing the game. The diameter of the flat base is also not uniform and varies from 1.4 cms to 2.8 cms. The cylindrical body measures between 1.4 cms to 2.8 cms in diameter. The top of some of these pieces are in hemispherical form and some are in conical shape. The dome on top has a wide base, designed so for picking the pieces with fingers with ease. The diameter varies from 1 cm to 3 cms at the point of maximum extension. Some of these pieces have a flat top. Though, these pieces were found in different excavations, spread over the whole of Tamilnadu, there is some uniformity in their shapes and sizes. Therefore these pieces are to be studied together.

If we look into these pieces carefully and ignore the minor differences, they (fig.1) fall into about eleven varieties. The first one is the smallest, shaped in the form of a small pyramid with an almost truncated top. It is red in clolur and has no slip. The second one is also small. It is black in colour and has an hourglass section having a flat base and top. The third also has a flat base and top with an hourglass section. In a second specimen the base is slightly wider than the flat top. The former was executed in red, while the later is in black. The fourth type has a flat base with a wide base and truncated top. It has a perfect cylindrical body rising vertically from the wide base. Both the illustrated specimens are red in colour. The fifth type is well polished in black and has an hourglass section and a flat top and base. The sixth type is a black piece having a flat base, slightly enlarging its size towards the top. The dome joins the cylindrical body with a wide rim. The seventh one has a flat base, having almost straight sides and a hemispherical dome. The other specimen has a slightly thin body. The former is red and the later is black in colour. The eighth type has

a flat base and has an hourglass section with a conical top. Another specimen has a thicker body. The ninth type has a flat base and a truncated top with a convex sided neck. The tenth type is black in colour and has a flat base with a hemispherical top and a slightly concave neck. The second specimen has a long vertical body. The eleventh type is a red gaming piece with a flat base. It has a cylindrical body tapering towards the top.



(Nos. 1,2,4,10,11: Kanchipuram; nos.4a,5,6,7,7a,8,8a: Uraiyur; nos.6a, 10a: Tirukkampuliyur; no.3: Mallappadi; no.3a: Appukkallu; no.9 :Kaverippattinam.)

It is very difficult to understand the type of game played with these gaming pieces. All these pieces have a flat base to facilitate stability and easy movement. Further, the top portion of some of these pieces are wide, to facilitate easy handling while playing. Therefore, it is rightly surmised that they were gamesmen used in a board game, though the board used for playing was not found in excavations. Though there is some uniformity in the shape among the different pieces, there is also some difference in its typology as shown above. Each type of the gaming piece could suggest a different character in the game. These pieces could suggest that a game similar to the game of chess or a prototype of chess was played during the early historical period.

The early historical period in Tamil country coincides partly with the last phase of the Sangam period. During this period, a large volume of literature, usually called the Sangam literature was composed. Though there is some controversy with regard to its date of composition and method of composition, the first three centuries of the Christian era are generally accepted as the period of its composition. The Sangam literature provides some information about the social and economic life and also the games played by the Sangam

Tamils. The games and pastimes of the Sangam period were studied by some scholars. R. Balasubramaniyan,[14] R.Tiruvikkiraman[15] and Sengaipotuvan[16] studied some of the games of the Sangam period.

There is no direct evidence to the game of chess in the Sangam literature. A prototype of chess is known from the literature. Three games, namely *vallu*, *vaṭṭu* and *kavaṟu* are considered here since they are related to the gamesmen described above and also provide a prototype to the game of chess. The available material is discussed below.

The game of *vallu* was played with a board namely *valluppalakai*. The gaming board (*valluppalakai*) was compared to an uneducated short man, which is very vauge.[17] Following the above description the gaming board is generally explained as a short and bent board similar to the back of a short man. There is an excellent description of persons and places where the game was played in a verse in *Puṟanāṉūṟu*.[18] According to it the game was played by old people at some deserted place. On the floor was drawn the pattern used for playing the game. Due to frequent dragging of the gaming pieces (*vallu nāy*) the floor developed shallow pits. These pits are shallow enough that in which the forest fowls laid their eggs. The destruction of the design of the board on the floor of a deserted hall were referred to in another place.[19] On one occasion a player was praised as a well trained player in the game of *vallu* (*vallup pōr vallāy*).[20] These descriptions show that the game of *vallu* was played with a board using gamesmen. The board could be prepared at the time of the play by drawing lines on the floor without much difficulty. The old people and others also played the game and it could be a game of war.

Vaṭṭu was another board game played with a device, *vaṭṭu*. The nature and the shape of the *vaṭṭu* could not be ascertained from the descriptions found in the literature. It could be a token used for playing the board game. *Vaṭṭu* has been said to resemble like the buried egg of a Tortoise.[21] In another instance it is said to resemble a marble stone which looks similar to the seed of a gooseberry.[22] In one of the colophons of *Puṟanāṉūṟu* the game of *vaṭṭu* has been referred to as a combat[23] and was played by two players. It is stated that one of the players threw the *vaṭṭu*, the gaming piece on the other for a wrong move. In another late work also the game of *vaṭṭu* has been referred to as combat.[24]

The court where the game was played or the board used for the game was referred to in the literature as *araṅgu*. It was prepared for the game by drawing the necessary design or pattern on the floor at the commencement of the play. The *araṅgu* was drawn by the uneducated boys for their play. The form of *araṅgu* was compared in the literature to the pattern of squares (*kaṭṭaḷai*) formed by the light and dark shades under a neem tree in a village.[25] This description gives us a clue that the game was played on a prepared pattern of

alternating white and black squares, similar to the pattern found on a chess board. In *Tirukkuṟaḷ* a person playing the game without an *araṅgu* (court/board) was compared to a person without having a sound knowledge of books, climbing the portals of an assembly of scholars.[26] In another place the game of *vaṭṭu* was played at *araṅgu* (board).[27] Therefore it could be suggested that *vattu* was a game played on a board or a pattern drawn on a floor which could resemble the chess board. It could also be a game of warfare. The game was played by using the instrument called *vattu*, which could be somewhat ovalish or roundish in shape.

The third one namely, *kavaṟu* is said to be another game played by people. It was played for coveting one's riches. The play is compared with uncertainty of life and one should not think of playing it. The game is referred to as gambling.[28] Playing of this game has been generally considered as an evil and treated on equal terms with the other two evils like women with two minds and toddy drinking.[29] In another place, it is stated that the game of *kavaṟu* shall not be played among lovers.[30] However, it could be a game of chance and luck, but the evil effects of the game were emphasized more in the literature. Therefore we may believe that the game of *kavaṟu* could refer to gambling.

The above descriptions of the terracotta gamesmen as well as the references to the games from the Tamil literature suggest that gaming board and gamesmen were known during the early historical period. Though, there are no references to terracotta gamesmen in the Sangam works, the use of gamesmen in the play could be suggested without much difficulty. A game generally represents a replica of some events in life or a copy of major events in society.

The game of *vallu* and *vaṭṭu* are described as a fighting or war game on a board. The Sangam society was a martial society where fighting and warfare are common among the chieftains and kings. These warring qualities could have been transformed into the toys of those periods also. The word *val* could mean strength and the reference to the fight could suggest the modern game of chess where the overpowering of the opponent's forces was the aim of the play. Therefore both the games of *vallu* and *vaṭṭu* could have represented as close to the game of chess. The *vaṭṭu* game could be another form of the board game where some other instrument like a dice could have been used to decide the move of a gamesman or a token. Therefore the cylindrical terracotta gaming pieces described as gamesmen could be identified with *vaṭṭu*. Probably with similar gaming pieces the games *vallu* and *vattu* were played. These games seem to be somewhat similar to the game of chess. In that context they may be identified as a similar or a prototype of the chess game.

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18. *Puṟanānūṟu*, v.52, ll.13-15.
19. *Akanānūṟu*, v.377, ll.6-9.
20. *Paripāṭal*, v.18, l.41.
21. *Akanānūṟu*, v. 160, ll.5-6.
22. *Akanānūṟu*, v.5, ll.9-10.
23. *Puranānūru*, v.43, colophone.
24. *Paḻamoḻi*, v.86.
25. *Naṟṟiṇai*, v.3, ll.3-5.
26. *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, v.401.
27. *Paḻamoḻi*, v.86.
28. *Innā Nāṟpatu*, v.25.
29. *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, v.920.
30. *Paḻamoḻi*, v.52.

CHAPTER 7

SOCIO CULTURAL ELEMENTS

As indicated earlier the origins of the terracotta art in Tamilnadu could go back to the proto historic period. The Neolithic animal head, supposed to be of deer family could not give us much information about the technique adopted by the artisans. However objects from other excavations provide some clue to the process of manufacture of figurines. The female figurine from Appukkallu, though not found in the Neolithic levels could suggest the earliest method of modeling a female torso. It has a tubular body on which were attached a head on the one end and legs on the other end. Hands were attached and the other features like breasts, were made first into a lump and then attached to the body. It seems that baking was primitive, since remains of soot and black colour are found on the body. The other torso of a female from Tirukkampuliyur provides some different evidence. The hand made lower torso was plain but the decorated girdle was indicated by a simple method of dots arranged in a design. This method was also an archaic form in which simple pinching method was adopted.

However it was during the early historical period more artifacts of terracotta were discovered. Though some of early techniques like appliqué and pinching were followed, new methods were accepted. As in the early period, most of the figurines were made by hand. They were solid figurines. Though the artists and the public used riverine clay for making objects, methods of mining and mixing of clay were unknown to us. From the Sangam literature we may understand that clay from the river was used for making toys. This clay was called as *vaṇḍal*, a fine variety of riverine clay. Clay from other sources could have been used by them. In Andhra and Karnataka a rocky material called kaolin was used for making art pieces. The clay or kaolin was made in to a fine paste. Some times fine sand was mixed with this paste. No scientific studies were made to identify the provenance of the clay or kaolin used for making terracotta figurines. However it may be broadly suggested that the clay or kaolin used was locally available material. In Tamilnadu, most of the terracottas were produced from clay obtained from the nearby localities. Terracotta figurines, made of kaolin were discovered in the excavations at Kanchipuram and the source of kaolin to the artists of Kanchipuram is unknown.

In the hand made technique the features were modeled by hand. In this method the figurines were made of a solid one. All the features of the face and body were either modeled at one time or different pieces were separately made and attached. Some of the figurines display such a technique. Using a stylus the features like eyes were drawn on the body. Similarly decorations were also executed. Most of the early figurines were not painted. Sometimes a lime wash was applied and to which later the red ochre was applied.

The second method used for making terracotta figurines was the mould technique. A negative mould was usually made of terracotta. On this mould the clay was pressed and the image was later obtained. By this method the artists could manufacture numerous images from one mould. In making use of these moulds, initially they used on mould only for making the frontal facial form. The back side of the figure would always been rendered plain, leaving the inner core as hollow. In the double mould, two moulds were used, one for the front and the other for the back. In both the cases the inner core of the figure would be hollow. The sides of the figures would also exhibit a thin line of joining of the two moulds. We have no idea of when this technique was adopted by the local artisans. However some scholarly opinion suggest that the mould technique was adopted from the Romans during the beginning years of the Christian era when the South India had regular trade with the Mediterranean world.

Though, most of the figurines were produced in different places in Tamilnadu, scholars are of the opinion that the terracotta artists in Tamilnadu were influenced by the art forms prevalent outside the Tamil country. These styles were noticed by those scholars mostly by looking at different features found on these figurines. Indian as well as foreign influences were suggested by them. After studying the Tirukkampuliyur terractottas, T.V. Mahalimgam. has suggested that northern style of art, especially from Ahichchatra, has influenced the modeling of one female torso. K.V. Soundara Rajan has found the influence of north Indian regional art styles in some of the terracotta pieces discovered in Kaveripattinam. In one of the female torso he has noticed the Sunga- Kushana art tradition. The influence of Gupta style was found in another figurine. The influence of Gandhara style of art has been pointed out in one head from Boluvampatti, by Sridharan. The influence of Ikshvaku tradition of art has been brought from one male figure from Kaveripattinam by K.V.Soundara Rajan. In another terracotta piece he has found the influence of Nagarjunakonda tradition. M.K. Davalikar has also suggested that some of the Megalithic terracotta exhibit Satavahana influence. While studying the Kadattur figurins, he has found the Scythian influence.

It is quite interesting that some of the early styles of art influenced the terracottas of Tamilnadu. In a remote place like Kadattur, the influence of Syria has been noticed. It is well known that terracotta figurines are of small size and could be transported easily to distant places. If these art pieces were prepared elsewhere and transported into Tamilnadu, the clay would have been different. However without making such studies to find out from where the raw material i.e. clay was obtained, making vauge observations have no validity. Moreover, several regional influences as suggested by scholars are to be studied thoroughly before coming to any conclusion, since, such a variety of influences are not noticed in the contemporary sculptural art in stone in Tamil country. We may point out that a majority of terracotta pieces found in the Tamil country exhibit undoubtedly the local idiom. This art style seems to have been followed with unbroken tradition for several centuries.

One of the important aspects of the study is to understand the utility of these terracotta figurines. In the case of other terracotta objects like gamesmen, moulds and tiles etc., the objects were produced for a specific purpose and use. The beads were used for decorating animals or women or sometimes utilized for other decorative purposes.

In the case of terracotta figurines, they were produced for a variety of purposes. The evidence at our disposal is very scanty and with that material we could not provide any suitable purpose. However, the production of similar objects of art is a continuing process in Taminadu. Therefore by studying some of contemporary practices followed among the Tamil population and also observing the ethnic evidence from other regions in India, we could trace reasonable the purpose for which these objects were produced in the past.

Though, there exists some amount of controversy on the utility of terracotta figurines produced in Tamilnadu, some express that they were mostly used in religious ceremonies. The female figurines were considered as an object of worship in the fertility cult. Some figurines were produced as icons and worshipped as a family deity. A good number of these figurines were used as toys by children. In some cases the figures were used as a votive object. Some of the finest ones, produced with certain amount of artistic skill, could be regarded as objects of art and decorated houses of rich people. Some of the art pieces, especially medallions, plaques and similar art pieces could have adorned the walls of houses and temples. The animal figurines could have used as toys by children. Some of these pieces also served as mounts to some deities.

There is one variety of terracotta figurines, described as mother and child. The figurine was designed as a seated mother holding in her hip a small baby. These figures were identified as representing fertility cult. On the other hand these figurines are to be considered as votive objects presented to temples by mothers after being endowed with

children. Some of the ethnographic studies show that mothers donate these votive figurines to temples after safe delivery of children.

Another variety of figurines given to the temples are the figures of children. The children images were made in two forms; one in a crawling position and the other in a seated position. The crawling baby is usually found naked but sometimes ornaments were shown on the body. These figures of baby could have been donated to temples after safe delivery of children. Sometimes, to remove an illness of a baby the crawling baby image would be donated. In some cases these crawling baby images has been wrongly identified with the image of Balakrishna. In the second one, i.e. seated figure of a baby also, it was shown naked, but sometimes with decorative ornaments. The baby would be shown as seated with the legs spread apart and outstretched hands. Such figures are votive figures, donated usually by the parents after fulfilling a wish. Presentation of images of babies made of clay and other materials are a common site in temples in many villages.

The terracotta figurines are a rich source for the study of socio cultural aspects of Tamilnadu from the earliest times to the present day. The art form and modeling has shown the unbroken continuity. The terracotta objects show the vibrant artistic form practiced earlier to the sculptural art in stone. Therefore some of the cultural elements unknown to the stone artists would find a place in this art form. Aspects like, ornaments, head-dress, and drapery could be studied from these figurines. Some of the religious beliefs among the rustic population and other social beliefs could be understood from a study of these figurines.

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Plate I

Plate I: 1. Adiyamankottai; 2,3. Alagarai; 4.Andippatti; 5 - 8. Appukkallu; 9. Aravakkurichi; 10 -12. Arikkamedu; 13,14. Boluvampatti; 15 - 17. Kadattur.

Plate II

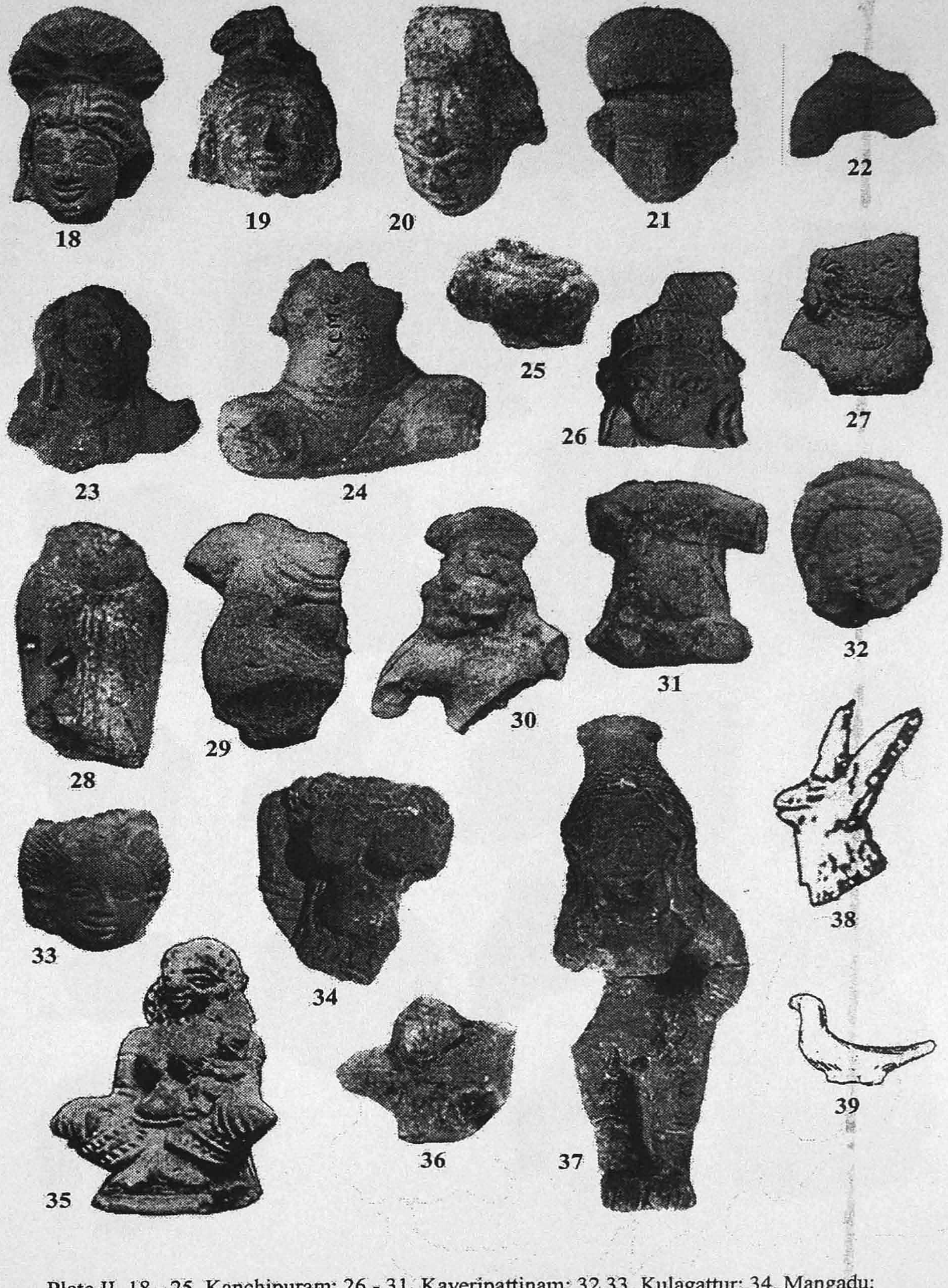

Plate II. 18 - 25. Kanchipuram; 26 - 31. Kaveripattinam; 32,33. Kulagattur; 34. Mangadu; 35. Manmangalam; 36,37. Modur; 38,39. Paiyampalli.

Plate III

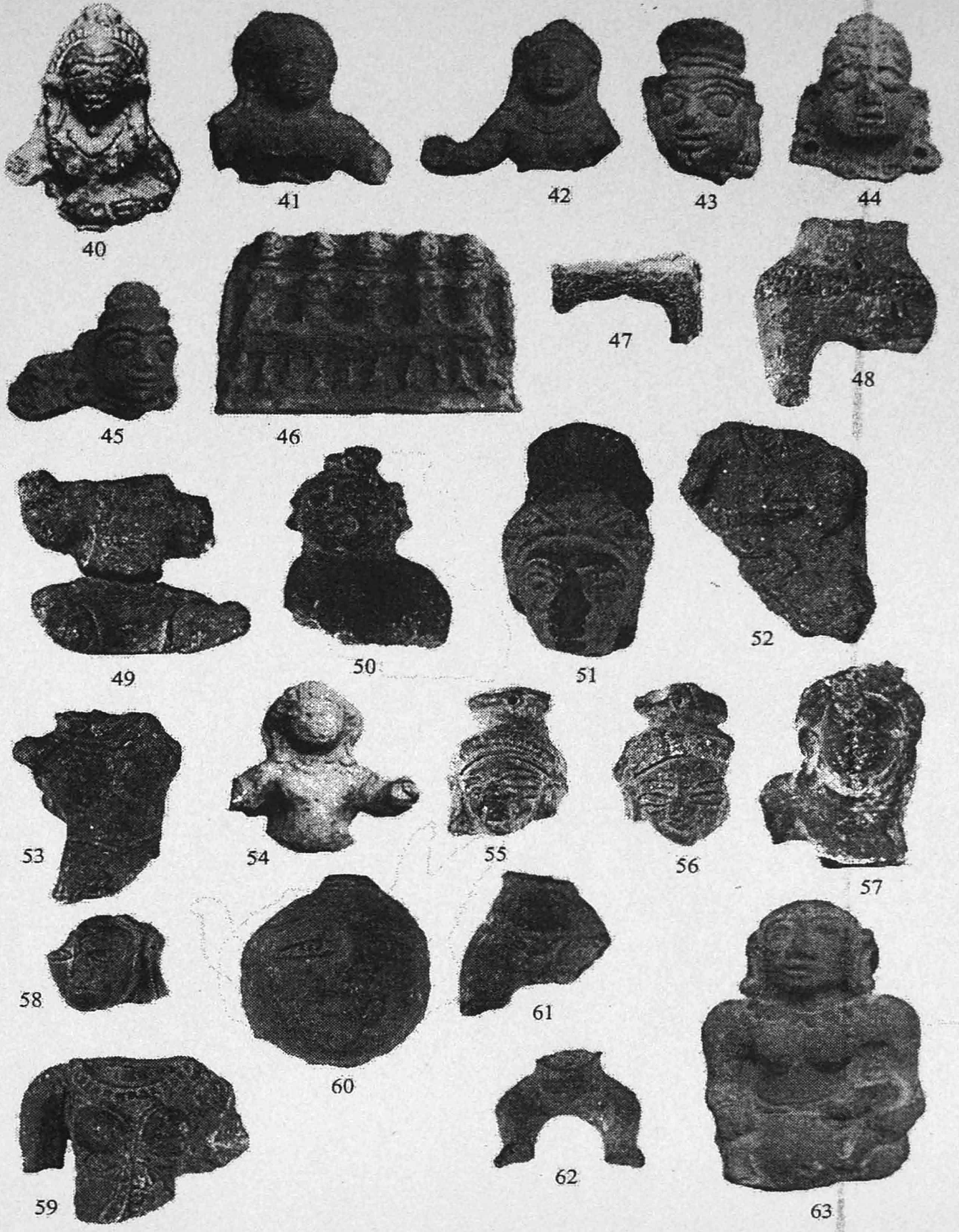

Plate III. 40 - 42. Panaiyakulam; 43 - 45. Rajalividuti; 46. Saluvankuppam; 47. Sanur; 48 - 53. Tirukkampuliyur; 54. Tirukkoyilur; 55 - 62. Uraiyur; 63. Uttamanayakkan Palaiyam